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THE

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THE first year's work of the American Institute of Sacred Literature has been finished (October 1st). Has it come to stay? Ask the eight hundred students who have been enrolled during the year in its correspondence schools of Hebrew, Arabic, New Testament Greek and the English Bible. Ask the thousand students who received instruction during the summer just closing in the various schools held under its auspices. Ask the thousand "special examiners" in every state, and almost every county, who are to-day working up groups of men and women to take the examination to be offered December 30th on "The Life of the Christ." The year, beginning strictly October 1st, 1889, has been but a partial one. The first prospectus was not ready until late in November. Work in several of the departments was not opened until after January 1st. But, in spite of delays and difficulties, the work has developed in a manner which is most gratifying to its friends. The new year promises much in the way of more perfect organization and wider usefulness. May friends of the work, already many, continue to multiply, and may the work of the year be guided by Him who is over all and in all.

FOR the International Sunday-school System, and those most closely connected with its management, we have the most profound regard. Under no circumstances would we knowingly say or do anything which would injure or detract from the great and prosperous work carried on under the

guidance of the International Committee. We believe that the present system is to continue in the future as in the past, though, possibly, with some modifications. This regard for the system, and this belief in its future growth, must not, however, blind our eyes to defects which begin to show themselves. The system is not a perfect one. It may be more perfect than any other which can be devised, and yet contain defects of no trivial character. These defects its best friends should desire to have pointed out. When they are recognized, they may be remedied. The one who points them out and emphasizes them in order that they may be seen most clearly, is not necessarily an enemy of the system. He may be one of its best friends. We desire to be understood as occupying the position of a friend,—a friend on the outside, and therefore compelled to speak, if we speak at all, from the outside. What are the defects? Mr. Blakeslee, in his article in the *Andover Review*, has pointed out some of them. We need not here comment upon them. It is sufficient to say that they are difficulties which the International Committee can, if they will, easily remove. Will they not do it? It is from this point of view of friendly suggestion that the "Plan of Bible Study for Sunday-schools" in the present number of the STUDENT (pp. 198–206) is offered.

CHAUTAUQUA—what is there in the world like it? It is not a man, and yet one man, John H. Vincent, has breathed his very soul into it. It is not a place, and yet a spot fairer than that which bears the name would be difficult to find. It is not an institution, and yet its outward form is similar in many respects to that of institutions of various kinds. It is none of these. It is rather a feeling, a spirit, an influence, which pervades the inner soul of all who come within its reach, which lifts men up and leads them to strive for something higher than that with which they are surrounded, which points toward heaven, not, to be sure, as the church points, and still in a way most helpful to the church. This spirit grows; it assumes new and varied forms. It will continue to grow, for its growth has but begun.

THE unsoundness of mind which is manifested in possession by "fixed ideas" is an established phenomenon in medical science. Biblical science has its examples of the same intellectual aberration. It appears in different stages and along different lines. Sometimes the realm of prophecy furnishes the material for these strange and, once established, alas! often ineradicable fancies. In the department of biblical chronology, men fall victims to vain imaginings, and spend their lives in the search after phantasmic harmonies, which reacts upon the mind and judgment, until the last state is seven times worse than the first. The latest example, over which the religious press, with a few exceptions, is enjoying a season of felicitation, is that of the assumed discovery in astronomical science that the particular day on which the sun and moon stood still in the valley of Ajalon was the scene of an extraordinary conjunction of heavenly bodies that accounts for and verifies the biblical statements. The mouths of rationalistic and infidel objectors are henceforth closed. But when we learn that the same discoverer of this wonderful "fact" has also proved beyond all doubt that the lost tribes of Israel are in England, it is with some shadow of a fear of "fixed ideas" that we contemplate the argument in explanation of the great miracle of Joshua. And then, further, we are inclined to ask, What is to be done with Joshua's command to these heavenly bodies and what becomes of the miracle itself, if all this is true? Or, again, how complicated and liable to error the calculations necessary to follow back from the present until that particular day and hour when the phenomena took place! To-morrow some other calculator will discover how his predecessor has blundered and we will be left again to the tender mercies of the rationalist and the infidel.

THE author of a recently published history of Egypt remarks in the preface, "It may appear strange to some readers that I have not treated of the Exodus. The event does not, however, properly belong to Egyptian history. It did not at all affect Egypt, however important it may have been to the Israelites." There are not many of us who will

accept the statement that Egyptian history was in no way affected by the contact of Israel; but we shall all agree with the writer that Egypt exerted a great and powerful influence upon Israel. Writers universally acknowledge this point, and yet there has never been made an adequate presentation of the facts in the case. This field of investigation, Egyptology, and its bearing upon Israelitish history and institutions deserves more attention at the hands of American students than it has yet received. We have many classical scholars, many Semitic specialists, but how few Egyptologists. There is almost a "craze" in some quarters in respect to Assyriology. When shall Egyptology take the place in our American work which it deserves? Where are the young men who will take up this subject and devote to it the spirit and the labor which America owes it?

THERE is something which lies beneath all methods and systems of Bible study, without which all are worse than useless. It is something far higher than cleverness, something deeper than even earnestness. It is an honest spirit. Unless you are prepared to deal honestly with yourself and with the Bible in your study of it, you would almost do better not to study it at all. The reference here is not merely to an honest facing of any problems or difficulties that may arise. Such an attitude toward biblical questions is certainly necessary for real progress in the overcoming of difficulties. They are not solved by ignoring or denying them. But a deeper honesty than that is the yielding up of oneself to the convictions of truth and duty which the Bible may force upon the mind and heart. Of what good is the best system, if you hide yourself from the results in conduct which the application of it to the Bible brings to light? It is the spirit of men who have most scientifically and brilliantly studied the Bible that has done the most harm not to themselves merely but to the method which they advocate and to the Christian world standing by asking, "What results?" and 'Whither does this tend?" It is because many of them have not honestly stood by their method and its issues in life that German bib-

lical scholars are in many quarters justly feared and their methods of interpretation opposed. Scientific critical Bible study, if its guidance be sincerely followed to the very end and its outcome in the practical religious life obeyed, will be found to be far more fruitful in a Christian life that is well-rounded and developed, than anything that is the genuine fruit of more imperfect Bible study. It must be so by as much as the new method is better than the old.

ONE phase of this subject is especially important to preachers of the Bible. They have their special temptations along this line. They are constantly drawn by the immense suggestiveness of the Scriptures to the use of biblical material in a way hardly warranted by an honest spirit of devotion to the real meaning and purpose of that material. This is popularly called the "accommodation of texts" to themes which are quite remote and disconnected from their original purport. How far this "accommodation" may go is a question possibly open to debate. There are men rash enough—to say the least—to defend it to any extent. But is it not most in accordance with the honest use of the Bible to avoid utterly this dangerous and in the end unprofitable habit? It is strongly said somewhere by Dr. Dale of Birmingham, "There should be a conscience in the study as well as in the counting-house. To attempt by skillful manipulation to get a better meaning out of a text than it contains is as fraudulent a proceeding as to attempt by skillful manipulation to get a better meaning out of a cheque than it contains." Such habits *are* dangerous in their effect upon the student and preacher. On the whole they are without real and permanent profit to the people. They "do not pay" intellectually or spiritually. Be wise by being honest in handling the Word of God in your study and in your pulpit!